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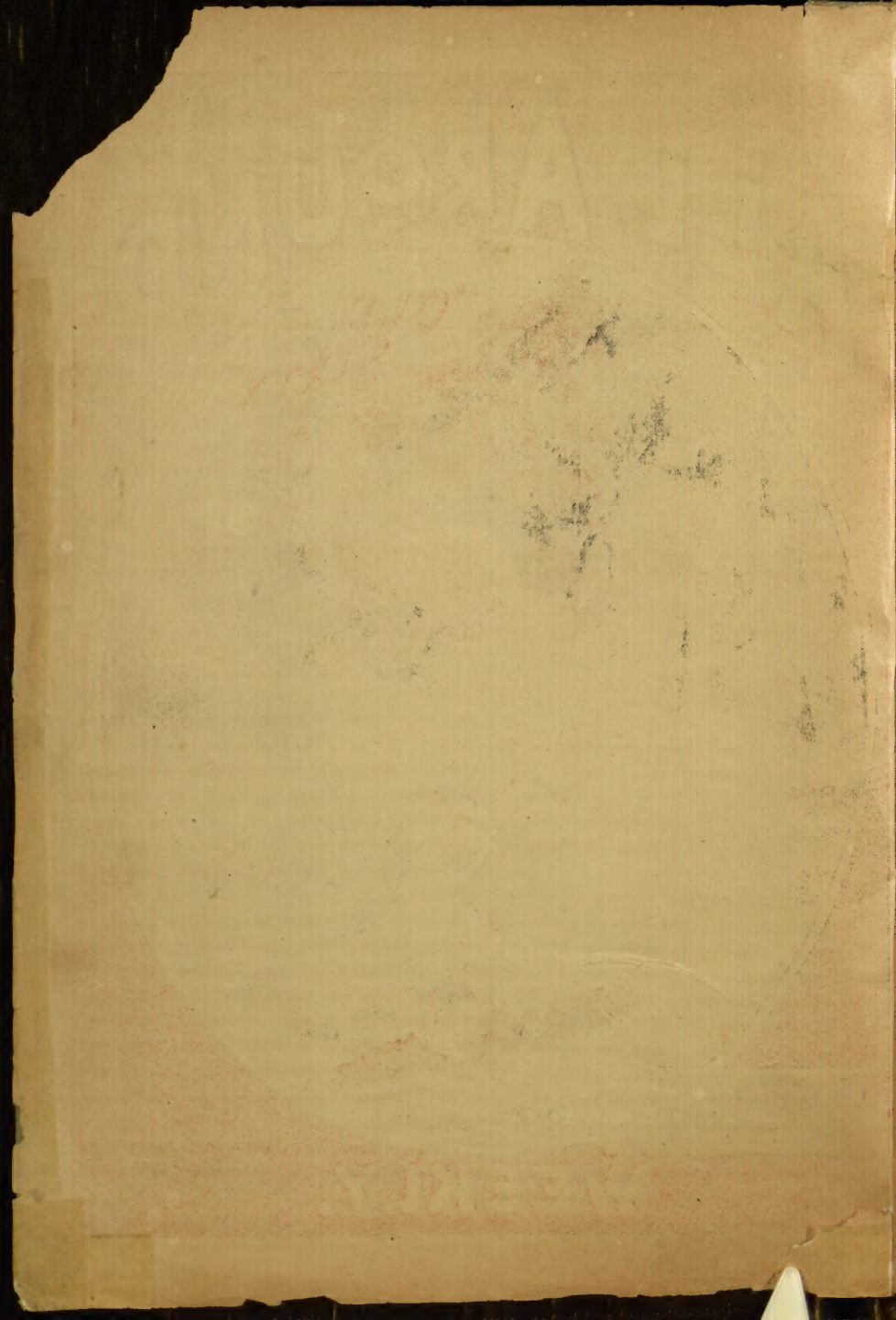
ALL AROUND



The instant Tom came to the top he struck out down stream. Crash! Boom! A moment later Old Sixty leaped into the chasm. The pilot struck the timbers.

WEEKLY.

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ALL AROUND WEEKLY

CONTAINING STORIES OF ALL KINDS

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“OLD SIXTY”

OR,

THE LAST RUN OF THE SPECIAL

By TOM BURNS

CHAPTER I.

TOM WARREN, THE BOY ENGINEER—OLD SIXTY—THE SPECIAL RUN.

Tom Warren was a young fellow, nineteen years of age, who had answered his country's call to arms during the second year of the War of the Rebellion.

At that time, however, he was only sixteen, but being tall and strong for his age, readily passed for being older.

When our story opens he was stationed at Brunswick, in the State of Georgia, being attached to the staff of the commandant, and a great favorite with the colonel, Edwin Ellis, of New York.

Tom was a New York boy himself, and this was one reason for his being in such good favor with the colonel.

Tom had always been of a mechanical turn, and this served him well when he went South.

At Brunswick, the Federals having charge of the northern terminus of the G. A. & G. Railway, Tom was set to running an engine, mainly in carrying men or supplies to short distances, the lower end of the road being still in possession of the Confederates.

The boy had at first attended to shifting cars in the yards, under direction of a competent engineer. Then he had got to running on his own account, being very quick to learn, and before long the engineer had been put upon other work, leaving Tom at the head of the dispatch department.

There was one engine in the yard which the young fellow delighted to run, although he did not often get a chance.

The number of this locomotive was “sixty,” and from this fact, and that she was especially speedy, and also one of the oldest engines on the road, Tom had christened her “Old Sixty,” and felt a particular pride in her.

“She can go like old sixty, you bet,” Tom would say, “but I never get a chance to show her speed nowadays.”

“You didn't know she was a special, did you?” asked old Ben Bucket, the man that used to fire for Tom.

“No; is that so?”

“Yes, sir; she used to draw the special fast express before the war, and I often had the handlin' of her. Tell ye what, she can go.”

Ben had always been loyal to the North, and when the Federals had come in he had joined them, having found

matter, previous to that, to keep out of the Con-
state ranks.

As it was seen he knew considerable about engines, he
had been given work in the yard at once.

In fact, he had formerly been an engineer himself, but
was considered too old and not reliable enough to run the
engine now.

Then, too, he was overfond of corn whisky, and that
made him unreliable, and that is how he was acting as
fireman for Tom, instead of taking the upper position.

"Yes, sir, Old Sixty was a special in the old days, and
used to make some mighty good runs. Tell ye what, I
believe I could make her spin now, if I wanted to."

"Well, don't I do it?" asked Tom.

"Yes, but you don't begin to get the time out of the old
machine that she's capable of. Tell ye what, she was
well named."

"I can get forty miles out of her. Don't you call that
good?"

"Forty miles?"

"Yes."

"H'm! Why don't you call her Old Forty, then?"

"What?" cried Tom eagerly.

A sudden thought had flashed through his busy brain.

"Didn't ye hear what I said?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Do you mean to say that Old Sixty——"

"Yes, that's her name."

"Can make——"

"Just what her name says."

"Sixty miles?"

"Sixty miles! Yes, sir, she can."

"In an hour?"

"In sixty minutes—a mile a minute. I know she can,
for I've seen her do it myself."

"Have you got that much out of her yourself?"

"I have done it myself. Didn't I tell ye I'd seen her
do some good things? Tell ye what, Tom, if I wasn't so
old, and didn't like corn whisky so much, and there was
an occasion for it, I'd like to show ye what the old ma-
chine can do under my hands."

"By gosh, Ben, if you made her do sixty miles, I can do
it, and I'll bet you odds on it."

"No, I guess not now, Tom. She's old and stiff in the

joints, just like me. 'Twould take a power of oil and
grease to fetch her up to that now, Tom."

"I tell you I can do it. I'm a New York boy, I am,
and I don't let any one beat me if I can help it. You're
going to see the special howl after this."

And so she did, much to every one's surprise.

They had not thought the old engine had one-half the
speed which Tom now put her to.

He would use no other, although there were some which
accounted better.

Tom knew that this was not the case.

They were newer, but were not capable of making the
speed that Old Sixty was.

Tom always had a liking for the old locomotive, and
now he fairly worshiped it.

Every time he ran out after this he took the old engine,
and no matter how short the distance he had to go, would
put her to her highest speed, and, as he said himself, fairly
made things howl.

"She don't come up to her name yet, Ben," he said to
the old fellow about a week after the conversation above
reported.

"No?"

"No; I can't get her to do more than fifty yet."

"Well, I guess she's too old, and that ye can't do it."

"I'll do it, or burst her!" cried Tom with determination.
That settled it, and Ben said no more.

He loved Old Sixty as much as Tom did, and not caring
to see her destroyed, did not press his point.

He would rather give in beaten than see the old engine's
career ended.

Thus time went on, and for a few days Tom paid great
attention to his engine, looking her over thoroughly, ran-
sacking her in every part, and giving her a good cleaning
from cab to pilot, and from smokestack to drivers.

He was bound that he would make as good time with
her as any one else.

To do this, however, she must have a thorough over-
hauling.

Tom's mechanical skill helped him wonderfully in this
work.

He learned more about an engine in three days than
he had ever thought it possible to acquire.

The result was that his favorite was greatly improved,
and, although he could not yet get the speed he wanted, the
running was much smoother, and he felt that before long

he would equal, if not exceed, the sixty miles of old Ben Bucket.

"She's called Old Sixty, and I'm going to make her keep to her name," he declared decisively. "If I had a chance to make a good long run of it, I'd soon show you what I can do."

The chance came sooner than he expected.

The date of our story was toward the close of the war, or early in the year 1865, and stirring events were taking place throughout the land.

General Grant, with the aid of his subordinate generals, was gradually breaking down the power of the Southern Confederacy, and even now many predicted the speedy close of the war and the defeat of the rebels.

It was at this time that General Sherman was striving for the possession of Atlanta.

This city was one of the principal points upon the G. A. & G. Railway, although the Federals were not able to run trains to that point, the country in its vicinity being then in possession of the Confederates.

One afternoon, then, Colonel Ellis sent for Tom, and said, abruptly:

"Would you like to run a special to Atlanta?"

"Run the special. Run Old Sixty to Atlanta? Why, it's more than four years since that's been done."

"Would you like to do it?"

Tom was perfectly wild with excitement.

Of course he would like to do it; in fact, there was nothing that he would like better.

"It's dangerous, you know, Tom. The enemy may still be in possession."

"Don't care if they are."

"And you must deliver dispatches from General Grant to General Sherman."

"I'll do it, for I want to see just how much time Old Sixty will make."

"Hadh't you better take a newer engine?"

"No, sir; this is a special trip, and the special is going to do it, if it is the last run she makes!"

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUNG ENGINEER IN HIS GLORY.

Tom instantly communicated the news to old Ben Bucket, ordering him to fire up and get steam on immediately.

Then he went back to the colonel for further orders.

"Tom," said his officer, handing him a sealed packet.

"You are about to engage in an important trust. I know I can depend upon you, if upon any one.

"I do not, therefore, tell you to do your best; I know you will do it without that.

"Deliver this packet if you can; if not, do not let it fall into the enemy's hands upon any account, as the instructions contained therein must be kept secret.

"If you cannot get it into Sherman's hands, destroy it; but I know that you will do all that any one can.

"We do not know as yet if Atlanta has fallen, and to penetrate the rebel lines may be difficult; and you will, therefore, take one carload of soldiers to assist you at that part of your journey.

"The road, doubtless, will be open all the way to Atlanta, and, in fact, our advices tell us that such is the case, the rebels having put their part of the line in repair, with the intention of giving us at this end a surprise.

"We must give it to them, Tom; and that is all I need tell you. Go, my boy, and may success attend you."

"Thank you, Colonel Ellis," cried Tom, taking the hand offered him and shaking it warmly. "You wish me to start?"

"At once."

"And get to Atlanta?"

"To-night, if possible. Hadn't you better take another engine?"

"No, sir; or, that is, I'd rather not. Will you trust my judgment in this matter?"

"Implicitly, Tom, my boy; for in this instance I feel that you know best."

"Then look out the window, sir, and in five minutes you'll see Old Sixty drawing the special. Good-by, sir. You may look for me to-morrow."

Then Tom thrust the papers into his breast pocket and started to leave.

"One moment, Tom."

"Yes, sir."

"You'd better take these. They are as trusty as yourself, and you may find them handy."

As he spoke, he handed Tom a belt containing two heavy caliber revolvers, and a quantity of cartridges.

"Thank you, sir; they look as if they would shoot straight, and although mine do that, these are better. Is that all, sir?"

es, Tom."

"Then good-by, sir, and good luck to our mission."

Tom fastened on the belt and hurried to the yard, where he found the special waiting for him.

There were the locomotive and tender, a platform car loaded with wood, and an ordinary passenger car, containing as many men as could be seated but no more.

Quite a crowd had assembled to witness the departure of the train.

"It's a long time since the special went out," said one.

"And it ought to be longer," muttered a second. "She ain't fit for anything but station work."

"That's all you know about it," rejoined the first man.

"Tom Warren knows his business, and he wouldn't take the old machine unless he knew she was certain to do what he expects of her."

"Then you think he'll succeed?"

This question was put in an eager whisper.

"Yes."

"Then we ought to do something to stop him."

"I intend to do so."

"You are pretty certain as to what his errand is?"

"He carries important dispatches to Sherman."

"Then if those dispatches are delivered——"

"The last hope of the Confederacy is lost."

"And you are going to let him start?"

"Yes, but you and I must see that he does not reach his destination."

"We will see to it. You have made your plans, then?"

"I have."

"Good! I was afraid you would fail us."

"Depend upon me, and between us we must be a couple of fools if we cannot outwit a mere boy."

The crowd was now cheering lustily.

Tom had reached the engine, and now entered the cab.

Then he sounded a shrill whistle of warning.

The crowd parted right and left, leaving the track free.

Then Old Sixty began moving at a rapid rate from the yard.

The two strangers had quickly elbowed their way through the crowd, and had now reached the rails.

With one quick bound they leaped upon the platform car and sat on the wood.

They were dressed as laborers, and no one was surprised at this act.

They were, doubtless, required to assist the young engineer.

Tom, chancing to turn his head, saw them, but their appearance caused him no emotion.

He presumed that they had been sent to assist old Ben Bucket, and he was rather glad than otherwise.

Had he known the real intentions of these two men, he would have summarily ejected them from the train.

Had he done so he would have been spared much trouble and annoyance; would have escaped many dangers.

Rattle, rattle, rattle!

Ding-dong, ding-dong!

Puff, puff, puff!

Toot-toot!

Whoo-oo-oo!

Away whirls the special, flying down the track with the speed of lightning.

Tom has thrown open the throttle to its full extent and has already crowded on a tremendous pressure of steam.

The old engine never made such a splendid start before.

The people are tremendously excited, and cheer themselves hoarse.

Tom soon passes out of sound of the cheers, and before long the shriek of his engine sinks to but a faint murmur in the distance.

Away they go, and men working in the fields by the side of the track say that Old Sixty must have gone mad, to be keeping up such an awful speed.

"She'll bust her b'iler in ten miles, if she keeps that up," remarks one.

"She'll jump from the track going around the sharp curve further on, see if she don't," prophesies another.

"We'll find her in the ditch near Brady's switch to-morrow," declares a third.

"What do boys know about running an engine, anyhow?" queries a fourth. "That boy ain't fit to run a headcar, much less a train."

Gentlemen all, you are entirely mistaken, and not one of your prophecies, declarations, or grumbings have a particle of truth in them.

Through woods and groves, by the side of streams, now up, now down, over bridges, under bridges, through tunnels, cutting through fields where men are busy at work, dashing along the highway where men hastily rein up their horses at the sound of the warning whistle, now through

regions where not a soul is seen, on and on speeds the special on her mission, Tom at his post, old Ben standing ready to obey his slightest command.

"What does she make, Tom?"

"What do you think?"

"Have you got her up to sixty yet?"

"Pretty near, but there's a straight bit of road ahead here, and then I'll fetch it."

Yes, provided he does not succumb to the danger which lies just ahead!

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO VILLAINS—SOMETHING IN THE WAY.

Away and away flies the special, and soon they reach a long stretch of woods where even at noonday a twilight gloom rests upon the scene.

One of the men sitting on the wood in the platform car says to his companion:

"I say, Rich?"

"What is it, Poor?"

"You must be ready to jump soon."

"What for?"

"There ought to be an obstruction on the track."

"Ought to be?"

"Yes, but they may have forgotten, or made a miscalculation. I never knew Old Sixty to make such fast time as this."

Tom, in the cab, looking out now and then to see that the track is clear, suddenly utters a cry of surprise.

It is so loud, so indicative of terror that old Ben is thrilled, and leaps forward as if shot.

Tom has suddenly thrust in the throttle with an energy that tells its own story.

The lever is placed amidships at the same moment, and the brakes reversed.

Toot—toot—toot!

It is the call for down brakes.

But there are no brakemen!

Has that important item been forgotten?

No; but the two men on the platform car have taken their places.

Tom quickly turns his head, and sees the men sitting there apparently unconcerned.

He yells so loud that his words are heard even the roar and rattle of the train.

"Down brakes, you fools! Can't you understand signal?"

"Down brakes!" yells old Ben, nearly thrown from his feet by the sudden jerk of the engine, as it feels the effect of the reversed motion.

The men understand well enough, and so they did at first, but still they make no move.

Tom glances ahead.

A large tree had fallen directly across the track.

If the engine ever strikes it she will be thrown off and wrecked; lives lost, and the young engineer's mission be unfulfilled.

Tom darts a quick glance at the two men behind him. They have not moved.

"They must be idiots or worse," he mutters.

As yet no suspicion of evil enters his head.

Leaping from the cab he springs upon the tender, and at two bounds is on the platform car.

His revolvers leap into his hands as he runs.

They are now pointed at the heads of the two men.

"Go to the brakes, or I'll fire!"

They may not hear, but they certainly understand.

Tom himself seizes the forward brake and crams it hard down.

Rich takes the rear one, and throws his whole weight upon it.

Whatever evil designs he may have against the life of the boy engineer, he sees that his own is in danger unless he obeys upon the instant.

"The young upstart does not lack courage," he mutters to himself. "Well, so much the better; I would rather meet a foe worthy of me than one whom I despise. There will be more glory in defeating him."

Poor has crossed to the passenger car, while one of the soldiers, understanding the call, is now trying to brake up the car.

The man assists him, knowing that the case requires it.

"Guess we've struck a snag," he thinks. "Reckon Rich didn't expect that."

But what of the train?

Will it stop in time to avert the danger?

The tree that has fallen over the track is a monster, being at least three feet in thickness, and extending over the track twenty feet in one direction and forty in another.

attempt to throw it off by means of the cow-catcher
and be madness.

It can only be removed by lifting it off, and that will
be a job for a score of strong men.

It was lucky that Tom had seen it when he had.

Owing to his prompt action the train was stopped in
time to prevent a frightful accident.

But not a second too soon for all that.

Bump!

As it was, the under bar of the pilot struck against it,
the engine not having lost all of her forward motion.

The soldiers were terribly jostled, and many were thrown
over the seats ahead of them, or into their comrades' laps
where the seats had been turned to accommodate card
parties.

Ben Bucket was thrown to the floor of the cab, but sus-
tained no serious injury.

Then the train came to a halt with a rattle and a flurry
like that of a man shaking himself upon awakening.

Tom instantly leaped to the ground and ran ahead.

"Sound the danger signal, Ben, and get the soldiers out."

Toot—toot!

Two sharp, short, piercing shrieks of the whistle now
sounded.

The soldiers now came hurrying from the car, ready for
fight.

As they swarmed out Tom looked hastily around him.

Where were the two brakemen?

He intended teaching them a pretty sharp lesson.

He could not see them, however, and yet he thought he
saw everybody that had been on the train.

And so he did.

He saw the brakemen as well as the others, but did not
recognize them.

And yet one would imagine that the dress of the men
ought to guide him.

So it ought, and so it would have done had they not
changed it.

To come to the point, the two men had pulled off their
rough overalls, thrown aside their loose jumpers, cast away
their slouched hats, and now appeared in the light blue
uniform of private soldiers.

When the train had stopped they had leaped down op-
posite to the side taken by Tom, and had hurriedly doffed
their working clothes under the car.

These were then wrapped about a stone and thrown into
the shallow ditch at the side of the track.

When the soldiers came running out, the two men joined
and mixed in with them.

No wonder, then, that Tom could not see the two brake-
men.

"Where are those two confounded fools of brakemen?"
he asked, glancing hurriedly around. "They might have
caused a wreck by their laziness."

"I fancy they have made off, evidently expecting some
rough treatment," answered the lieutenant in charge of the
soldiers.

"Gone!"

"Yes. I saw them jump off and hurry away, but I
missed them in a moment again, so that they must have
made the best of their time through the woods."

"By George! this is not an accident!" cried Tom, now
standing by the butt of the fallen tree.

The meaning of his words was apparent to all in an
instant.

The tree had not been blown down, or fallen of its own
accord from decay or weakness.

It had been felled by an axe!

There was evidently a design in the tree having fallen
just where it had.

The base had been cleanly cut, as though by experienced
woodsmen, and in such a manner as to make it fall in
just the position where it now lay.

Every one who looked at it admitted such to be the fact.
Who could have done it?

There could have been but one motive.

The wreck or delay of the train had been aimed at.

"Well," said Tom, "we don't know, and we haven't time
now to find out who did this. We must get the tree out
of our path at once."

That seemed easier said than done, however.

"Lay hold here, boys," cried the young engineer.
"Spread yourselves out; we don't want you all in one
place, and we want every man to do his level best."

The men ranged themselves on both sides of the tree
along the greater part of its length.

"Now wait a moment until I back down a bit, and
then lift this shorter end around and over the track. That's
easier than moving the long end, although this is the heav-
iest and we want to make the work as light as possible."

Tom then backed his engine far enough down to allow of its being cleared by the tree as it was swung around.

"Now, then, all together! Lift! No shirking, boys. Let every man lift his utmost. The quicker we get it out of the way the sooner we will get ahead."

At a given signal from Tom, which was one short whistle from the engine, the men laid hold, and tugged like good fellows at the heavy trunk.

They lifted one end around so that it cleared one rail, but then they had to stop.

The upper end had become caught, and would have to be lifted to a considerable height in order to clear it and free the lower end.

"Stop a bit!" cried Tom.

The men paused, awaiting further orders.

"Is there such a thing as a rope in the cab, or on the train, Ben?"

Ben ransacked the cab, and some of the men did the same for the car.

There wasn't rope enough to go around a baby's waist.

"Hold on; I've got it."

"The rope?" asked Ben Bucket.

"No, but an idea. Take off your belts, a dozen of you."

Off came the belts in a twinkling.

"Now link them together like a chain."

This was done, and the next move was awaited anxiously.

Every one wondered what Tom was going to do.

"I want more belts," he said, and off came a dozen more.

"Now fasten it securely to the end of the tree, where it won't slip, and then hook your belt-chain to the tongue in front of my engine."

While the men lifted the end of the tree again, Ben Bucket passed the belts around it and made them fast.

He then secured them tightly to the tongue in front of the pilot, and Tom mounted the cab.

Toot—toot!

Chew—chew!

Puff—puff!

The engine moved slowly backward down the track.

The belts tightened, and the tree began to stir, though slightly.

"Give her a lift," cried Tom. "Lay hold, all hands, and help!"

All hands sprang to the task, and now the tree began to move more rapidly.

The upper end was drawn out, and presently the tree lay along the track between the rails.

It was more like a huge log, the top branches having been broken off when it had first fallen, or been subsequently cut away with axes, as was now ascertained.

Fortunately, on account of the help that the soldiers gave, the belts did not pull away or break, and before long the whole trunk lay between the rails, clear of all encumbrances.

Tom gave a snort from "Old Sixty" in token of his triumph, and then called out:

"Get your belts, all of you, and we'll have this thing off in a few minutes."

Shortly afterward all hands took hold of the tree, and, exerting all their strength, rolled it clear of the rails and into the ditch.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom, "now we're off!"

They were not, however, as he soon discovered.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRACK CLEARED—THE TOTTERING BRIDGE.

"Hold up, Tom," shouted Ben, as Tom was about to open the throttle, the men having already jumped aboard.

"What's the matter now?"

"Broken rail!"

"Pshaw!"

The two plotters, sitting aside from the rest, exchanged significant winks.

Then they got out, as did several others.

"Reckon he won't get ahead as fast as he thinks, Rich."

"You bet he won't, Poor."

"There's more trouble ahead than he imagines, Rich."

"Bet your life, Poor."

Tom had already leaped from his engine and gone ahead.

It was as Ben had briefly stated.

The tree, in falling, had broken not only one, but two of the rails, although, in the excitement, even the keen-eyed Tom had not noticed this most awkward and annoying circumstance.

The two parallel rails, at the point where the tree had fallen on the track, had been badly broken, so as to render

age of the engine over them exceedingly hazard-

What was to be done now?

Tom scratched his curly head in perplexity.

"I've got it!" he presently cried.

"Keep it!" roared the men, with a laugh.

"Does it bite?" asked the lieutenant, whereat the men roared again.

"Ben!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Look in the locker and get out the big pliers, a crow-bar and a sledg."

"All right, sir," and the required tools were quickly forthcoming.

"Now, then, to take out these broken rails."

"All right, sir. Tell ye what, Tom, you have got a head on you, and no mistake."

Tom and his man then quickly got to work removing the broken rails, and, with the assistance of the soldiers, at the end of ten minutes had them out and lying alongside of the track.

The two plotters regarded these proceedings with ill-concealed chagrin.

"That boy is a thoroughbred, Rich!"

"Right you are, Poor."

"We haven't a mere chicken to deal with, Rich!"

"Bet your life we haven't, Poor."

"But we must beat him."

"We've got to, or the Confederacy, already on its last legs, will be knocked higher than a kite."

"Well, what are you going to do now?" asked the lieutenant. "You can't stretch the rails down to fill up this gap."

"No, but I can take up a couple of rails behind us and put them here."

"But you will leave a gap for the next train that comes along to stumble into."

"That's their lookout. I've got to go on, no matter what happens. Besides, I can leave word at the next town to send men back and repair the break, or I can telegraph on to Brunswick and have men sent ahead to do it."

Tom had been losing no time during this explanation, and already he and Ben had loosened one rail, which the soldiers now carried ahead and laid in its proper place.

When the other one had been served in like manner,

Tom himself drove in the spike which held them, being guided by the old holes.

The renewing of the broken rails had occupied about twenty minutes. So that, altogether, they had lost a full hour by the falling of the tree.

"Now we're off, anyhow!" cried Tom. "Pile in with you, boys. I guess you won't have to work any more for your passage."

The soldiers tumbled into the car at both ends and took their seats, glad to get on again after their delay.

Ben had piled the tender full of wood in the meantime, and filled the tanks with water from the ditch, for Tom used a great deal of both these necessary materials; and now the boy mounted his high seat and gave the signal that all was ready for the start.

Toot!

"Old Sixty" gave a snort. Tom threw open the throttle, put his lever in place, and sat back contentedly on his seat as the train went bowling down the line at a good forty-mile run.

Once out of the woods, which they cleared at the end of another five miles, they struck a line of straight road, along which the train fairly flew.

"Pack her up tight, Ben," cried Tom in shrill tones.

"Oh! she'll stand it, you bet," yelled Ben Bucket, as he threw stick after stick of hard wood into the seething flames.

"How does she go now, Ben?"

Ben had one hand on his pulse, and watched the mile posts for about five minutes.

"Tell ye what!" he cried.

"Well, what do you make it?"

"It's all of sixty, Tom, for I can't be beat on reckoning time that-a-way, particularly when I've settled my pulse down with a drink or so."

"Does it require that?"

"Yes; if I h'aint had nothing to drink, it's likely to be irregular and jumps about, so that it's harder to figger on; but when I've had about three drinks of corn whisky, then it settles right down to business, and I can tell to a hair by its beats just how fast we're going."

"Well, Ben, I'd rather have my watch, for I don't have to give that a drink, and it can always be depended upon."

"But then it might stop," argued the fireman, as Tom consulted his elegant gold repeater—a present to him from Colonel Ellis.

"And you can be relied upon not to stop—drinking corn whisky—can't you, eh, Ben?"

Ben laughed, and at a nod from Tom slung in more wood to feed the roaring furnace.

"Is that why they call you Ben Bucket?" asked Tom, when the fireman paused a while to rest, the fire not needing any more attention just then.

"'Cause why, Tom?"

"Because you drink so much! You take it by the bucket, I suppose?"

"Name's Birkett, Mister Tom, but these here Southerners, they clips everything so short, you know, and that accounts for the bucket; though I tell ye what, I could drink a bucketful if I was rale dry, and never think nothing of it."

"I don't doubt it, old man; but you must keep sober this trip at all events, for we've got important business on hand, and it won't do to miss connections. Put on more wood."

"But I say, Tom, you'll bust the b'iler, sure as shoot-in'."

"No, I won't."

"But you're making sixty-two now. What more do you want?"

"You said I couldn't beat sixty."

"I didn't think ye could. But what's the use?"

"I've got to make up for the time we lost. Besides, I must stop at the next town and telegraph back."

"That's the last Union town you'll strike?"

"Yes, Ben."

"Then you get into rebel country?"

"Sure enough. You're as good as a map, Ben."

"Then you'll have more ticklish work."

Tom tapped his revolver significantly, but made no verbal reply.

They were fairly bowling along now, whisking around curves like mad, racing down the levels, speeding along up and down grades, as though that made little difference, and scaring people out of their wits as they went howling and screaming by.

The soldiers could hardly keep their seats, and Rich and Poor, on their seat on the woodbox, had all they could do to keep from being sprawled over the floor a dozen times a minute.

They were going at a terrible rate of speed indeed.

Tom, however, saw that he would safely keep it up.

The old engine was fully worthy of the encomium Ben had passed upon it.

Since Tom had overhauled it and freshened it up in so many ways, it was even better than it had been in the old days.

"She's getting warmed up to her work," mused Ben, "and if she don't bust, she'll go like Sam Hill yet. I shouldn't like to see Old Sixty bust, though, even for 'Lysses Grant, Billy Sherman, and the whole pile of 'em."

Tom had no notion of bursting, however, and so kept on at the same high rate of speed, although he did not increase it.

Presently Ben pointed where there was a small bridge spanning a deer creek or run.

"Going to slow up?" asked Ben, rather with his eyes than with his organs of speech, for the country at this point was very rocky, the road passing between high cliffs, and it would have been impossible for Ben to have been heard.

"No," said Tom, shaking his head.

Ben shook his in turn, but it was done as showing a doubt of the wisdom of this proceeding.

However, they were almost upon the bridge at this moment.

To slow up, therefore, before crossing, would have been next to impossible without danger to the train.

On they rushed with a snort, and now the bridge trembled beneath them.

Tom thought it trembled too much, in fact.

For an instant a horrible feeling took possession of him.

Then he felt the firm roadbed beneath him, and the danger, if there had been any, was passed.

Leaning far out at the side of the cab, and holding on firmly by the guardrail, he glanced swiftly backward.

"Great goodness!" he ejaculated, "the bridge has gone down!"

The white horror of the boy's face alarmed Ben, and he leaned out at the other side of the cab.

He took in the situation at a glance.

No wonder the bridge had trembled beneath them as they passed over.

Now there was not the slightest fragment of it remaining.

It had gone down with a crash immediately after they had crossed it.

Every speed at which they had made the passage had won their salvation.

Had they slowed up before crossing they would have gone down with it.

Their mangled corpses, far below, would have been all that was left to tell the awful story.

Old Ben realized this, and was glad for once that Tom had beaten his record and disregarded his warning.

As for Tom himself, although he now breathed freer, he could not but feel that this run of the special had already been an eventful one.

Aye, so it had, but there were perils yet in store for them to which those through which they had already passed would seem mere trifles later on.

CHAPTER V.

THROUGH FIRE AND SMOKE.

Tom slackened his speed somewhat after this last adventure, as the town at which he intended to stop was now not far ahead, and he did not want to go by it before coming to a halt.

This part of the country was new to Tom, as he had never made so long a run before on the road, but to Ben Bucket it was like an open book.

There was a thick pine grove not far ahead of them, and this, in times gone by, had enjoyed a most unenviable reputation.

Bands of outlaws had made it a rendezvous, and, later on, parties of guerrillas had encamped here and demanded tribute of all passers, no matter under what flag they served.

Stray thoughts were passing through Ben's mind.

He seemed to fancy that somehow or other the mission upon which Tom was bent had become known to the rebels, and that they would try to stop him at this very place.

To be sure, the Federal forces were in possession, but, even so, it would not be such a difficult thing for a party of the enemy to have taken possession of this section in order to prevent the passage of the train.

As they approached the place, therefore, Ben felt anything but easy.

Their water would not last much longer, and they could not stop for any before reaching the town, so that any detentions now would be fatal.

Just as they entered the grove Ben was seized with a sudden presentiment.

Leaping from his seat he seized Tom and pulled him to the floor in an instant.

It was well that he did so, and it would almost seem as if the old fellow had had a gift of prophecy.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack—crack—crack—crr—ack!

A perfect volley of rifle shots suddenly burst out from the deep shade of the pines.

A shower of bullets riddled the glass in the cab windows, or flattened themselves against the boiler.

Had Tom remained where he had been for an instant longer his life would not have been worth a rush.

As it was, he had been saved as if by the merest chance.

The train swept by, and a chorus of yells were heard from the depths of the wood.

"Guess the boys must have failed again, Rich," said one of our villains in the car to the other.

"So they must have, Poor."

A shower of bullets now came flying through the car windows, shivering the glass and wounding several of the soldiers, none of them seriously, however, which was very fortunate.

The danger was not over, for all that.

Tom resumed his seat and darted a startled glance behind him.

His hair literally stood on end at the sight that met his gaze.

The wood behind was all afire!

The rebels, for such they were—and Rich had already given them notice of the coming of the train, bidding them look out for it, in case it escaped the snares already set for it—had, in their rage at Tom's escape, set fire to the dry grass on either side of the track.

One hears of things going like wildfire, and the present instance was an exemplification of the fitness of the saying.

The flames seemed to burst spontaneously from a score of points at the same instant.

They ran along the ground, even outstripping the speed of the engine, and almost in an instant the whole grove was one scorching, withering furnace of fire.

The rebels were obliged to flee in hot haste, lest their own weapon should recoil upon them.

The heat was intense, and to make the situation more terrible, there now commenced a perfect rain of fire from the branches overhead, the flames having quickly mounted to the tops of even the tallest trees.

Burning pitch, showers of flaming branches, and a legion of sparks fell on the roof of the coach, scattered themselves over the wood on the platform car, and even invaded the precincts of the cab, so that nowhere was there safety to be found.

The roof of the passenger car began to smoke, the heat within being simply intolerable.

The wood used for fuel, being exposed to the full fury of the fiery rain, now burst into flames, and as the wind drove these toward the cab, the situation of the engineer and fireman was not one to be envied.

And there was still a considerable distance to go ere they would reach the limit of the wood.

It was like passing through the gates of the infernal regions.

The air was stifling, and every instant it grew hotter and more oppressing.

The roof of the cab was afire, and not a drop of water could be spared to put it out.

The wood on the platform car was now burning furiously, threatening the destruction of the whole train.

Tom signaled to Ben to increase the fires, and soon the engine flew along the track at a speed which was perfectly maddening to think of, to say nothing of having to experience it.

At last, much to Tom's unspeakable joy, the grove was passed and the station came into sight.

Not daring to stop in front of the platform, where there would be great danger of the buildings being set on fire, Tom ran beyond it before he came to a halt, stopping, however, before a convenient water tank.

The hose was immediately turned upon the burning train, and the soldiers were literally flooded with water, so that it was an even chance that, having escaped burning up, they were now to be drowned.

The passenger coach was quickly detached and shoved upon a siding, the bluecoats alighting and forming on

the platform until a new car was made ready.

The half-consumed wood was unloaded, and a new car taken on, after which the passenger car to replace the one that had been left behind was run down to the station and joined on.

Now, it so happened that our friends, Rich and Poor, attended to this business; and it need scarcely be said that some scheme of villainy was immediately set on foot.

"We don't care to take these soldiers any further, do we, Rich?"

"It would, indeed, be a shame to take them into our own country only to slaughter 'em. Suppose we drop 'em, Poor."

The two men were engaged in coupling the two cars when this conversation took place.

There was a considerable crowd about the platform, but nearly all seemed to pay their attention to the soldiers or to the half-burned car, and the two rogues passed almost unnoticed.

"It would be a pity to put an iron pin in, wouldn't it, Rich?"

"Yes; I think a wooden one would do better, Poor." The villains had evidently been preparing for just such an emergency.

Rich produced from the inside breast pocket of his coat a stout wooden pin, which, as the cars came together, he dropped into the socket usually filled by an iron pin.

In the confusion the change was not noticed, and presently, seeing that all was apparently right, and having taken in wood and water enough to last for a considerable run, Tom warned all to get aboard, and steamed rapidly out of the little town, never dreaming of the surprise in store for him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIGHT ON THE TRAIN—HORSE AGAINST STEAM—TOM'S RESOLUTION.

Rich and Poor did not ride with the soldiers during this stage of the journey, having resumed their old place on the woodpile.

thought anything of this, however, and Tom did not even know of it.

The young fellow was too busy to trouble his head to look around.

Perhaps it would have been better if he had.

The shades of evening now began to fall, and as the train occasionally passed through the woods, it was at times quite dark.

During this time the two scoundrels were anxiously awaiting the time when the wooden pin would break or fall out and leave the soldiers behind.

At last, when they were passing through a long and dark tunnel, the event so long waited for occurred.

The plotters knew what happened by the sound.

"They've left us, Rich."

"So they have, and this fine young fellow on ahead won't know it for some time yet."

"I'll tell you what we'll do!"

"What?"

"Get rid of some of this wood. We don't want it."

"No more we don't, Poor."

"It's only in our way, Rich."

"So it is."

Then the two scamps began throwing the wood nearest them from the car to the ground, working expeditiously in spite of the darkness,

Presently they emerged from the tunnel into a wood, and as it was still dark they kept up their work of unloading, chuckling to themselves as they did so.

Meanwhile old Ben Bucket began to grow suspicious.

"Tom!"

"Well?"

"How fast?"

"The old rate."

"Sixty?"

"Yes."

"Don't the train feel light?"

"The road is easier, I guess."

At this moment they left the woods and ran through a stretch of open country.

Here it was sufficiently light for them to distinguish all large objects plainly.

"Tom!"

"What is it?"

"Turn around."

Tom looked back.

"Hallo!"

"Don't you miss something?"

"I should say I did!"

"What has become of the car containing the soldiers?"

"How should I know? When did you miss it?"

"Just now; but you know I told you I thought we were running awful light."

"We must go back."

Tom was about to put his hand on the throttle valve to throw it in, when he suddenly caught sight of the two villains.

"I say, Ben, look at those two fellows. I'll bet money on it that they're the same that played us that trick back there before we met that tree."

"Didn't they get off?"

"Yes, and they got on again."

"But these fellows are soldiers."

"No, they are not. Where are their guns? They're those two villains with their overalls and jumpers thrown off."

"What are you going to do?"

"Put 'em off."

Tom began to slow up, and then crossing the tender, he shouted out:

"Here, what are you two fellows doing?"

"Nothing."

"Where is that car?"

"Don't know."

"Well, you get off, both of you. We're not giving free rides to tramps."

The engine had now begun to run more slowly, although it was still going fast enough to make jumping or being thrown off an exceedingly dangerous operation.

Tom pulled out one of his revolvers, leaped upon the car, and said:

"Now get! You're a couple of spies, and I don't want you here."

"Then you've got to put us off," said Rich.

"You'll jump off or get a bullet through you. Which would you rather have?"

"It won't be neither!" cried Rich savagely, making a sudden dash at Tom.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Tom was not to be caught napping.

He fired upon the instant.

His aim was not good, however.

The jolting of the car distorted it.

The bullets flew harmlessly over the villain's head.

His companion did not fare so well, though.

One of the shots intended for Rich hit him in the leg.

He fell, and was hit in the shoulder by a glancing ball.

The pain caused by a spent ball hitting one is always worse than a direct one.

The man roared like a pig under a gate.

He rolled from the car, struck an embankment, and brought up in a ditch, twenty feet below.

"There goes your friend," cried Tom. "Follow him, if you want to get off with a whole skin."

The spy had no such intention, and as they were going slowly around a curve, he made a sudden spring, and caught Tom about the waist.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Tom emptied the last chambers of his revolver.

One of the bullets took away a piece of the villain's right ear.

Another carried away his hat.

The third did no damage whatever.

Then the two men clinched, each determined to throw the other off.

At that moment they struck a plank road which ran parallel with the railroad for some little distance, before the latter took a long turn around a mountain.

Suddenly a terrible sound broke upon the ear.

It was the rebel yell!

And there, down the road where it turned, came rushing a troop of rebel cavalry.

Their uniforms were easily distinguishable, but it was the yell which really identified them.

"Ben!"

"Yes!"

"Clap on all steam, or we are lost!"

Ben threw open the throttle, the steam rushed into the cylinders, the pistons flew in and out like lightning, the great drive wheels revolved, and away sped Old Sixty as the rebel troop dashed up at full gallop.

At the same instant Tom, by a dexterous trip or fall known to expert wrestlers, threw Rich upon his back, and then fell beside him.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Crack-bang! crash-bang, crack!

The rebels opened a regular fusillade upon the train with their carbines and revolvers.

The bullets flew about like hailstone.

Fortunate was it for Tom that he had fallen upon his face.

Had he remained upright he would have been riddled with bullets in an instant.

As for Rich, he had fallen from the train in the dust, and, rolling over and over, had narrowly escaped being trodden under foot by the rebel troopers.

Tom had not finished with his enemies, however.

As he lay on the loose wood, being partly screened from view behind some thick sticks, he quickly drew his second revolver.

Crack!

Crack!

One of the foremost riders fell from his saddle with an oath on his lips, and never rose again.

Crack!

A second received a shot through the head, sprang up in his saddle, and then fell across his horse's neck, a corpse.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

The rebels returned the fire, but, although several shots struck the log behind which Tom was ensconced, he was fortunate enough not to be hit.

As for old Ben, he had crouched down in the cab, and was himself peppering away in good style at the enemy.

The latter were now out of good range, however, and they ceased firing.

Tom went back to his engine, and, after reloading his revolvers, set Old Sixty to spinning.

The troopers at first seemed to have the idea that they could keep up with the engine, and a mad race between the horse and his steam prototype began, the two roads leading side and side for some little distance.

Tom blew a shrill whistle, which completely drowned the rebel yell, and soon left his enemies far in the rear, discomfited at their defeat.

"I'll see what," chuckled Ben Bucket, "it takes more'n a hoss to catch up to Old Sixty."

"So it does, Ben."

"But I say, Tom!"

"Well?"

"You can't go more'n forty miles around this mountain; it ain't safe. I never could make more than thirty with the old machine; but I'll give you ten miles."

"What's the matter?"

"Curves and upgrades. There is a carriage road over it, and a good hoss could beat us, 'cause he won't have so far to go by a half."

"Do you think the rebs will try to cut us off that way?"

"No; they went too far, and they'd lose time going back now."

"Then I'll go slow; but remember that we are in the enemy's country now, and are likely to have lots more fun than we've had already, even since our start."

"Well, I don't know as it can make much difference, for you're a thoroughbred, and Old Sixty, when you get hold of her, is a regular howler, and you can bet money on it, as you say."

"And I'll bet money on it that I'll get into Atlanta to-night; for I'm already ahead of my record."

CHAPTER VII.

OVER THE MOUNTAINS—THE MESSAGE.

The last that Tom saw of Rich was when he was rolling over and over in the dust, at great risk of being trodden under foot by the horses of the Confederates.

Some of the latter were killed, the main body setting off at full speed after Tom's train, which, however, distanced them in a short time.

Rich, however, was left behind, though not for any great length of time.

It was highly important to him that he should overtake Tom, if possible, and obtain the dispatches he carried, or, at least, prevent him from delivering them.

Now, Rich was as fully acquainted with that short cut

over the mountain as old Ben Bucket was, and he knew that to intercept the young fellow he must lose no time.

He saw the troopers galloping after Old Sixty, and laughed loudly at their folly, well knowing the futility of their mad attempt.

He knew a surer mode of intercepting the runaway than that.

However, he could do nothing without a horse.

Where, then, was he to obtain one?

Glancing hurriedly around, he espied the dead body of one of the horsemen lying by the side of the railroad track.

Near it stood the animal lately ridden by the dead Confederate.

One glance sufficed to show him that the creature was sound and strong, and still fresh.

That was all that he required.

The dead man's foot had caught in the stirrup, but the sagacious animal had not moved from where he had stood at the time his rider had fallen.

To disentangle the stirrup was the work of an instant.

To spring into the saddle occupied another.

Then, with a light touch of the whip and a slight pressure of the heels upon the animal's side, he was off and away like a shot.

Night had now fallen, but the man knew the way he was about to travel as well by night as by day.

Turning sharp off from the road pursued by the horsemen, he made his way along a narrow, steeply ascending path, not much more than wide enough for a wagon, dashing on as freely as though it were broad daylight.

The road made but few curves, being almost straight, the intersecting paths that now and then appeared being shunned by the rider, who knew the country too well to be deceived by them.

Once or twice there were points upon the path where a person, not knowing his way, might very easily go astray, the right road being hardly distinguishable from the wrong one.

Our rider, however, knew exactly where he was going, and he took the most direct road which it was possible to take.

"I have acted like a fool!" he muttered. "I presumed that this boy would fall an easy victim to my schemes, but it is he that has outwitted me."

"I know he has most important dispatches to deliver, and could I but obtain a sight of them and learn their import, that is all I would desire, and he might keep them if he chose.

"Strange that all my plans should have been overturned by a boy. Ah! it was all through too lightly estimating him, and thinking that he would be easily fooled.

"However, let me but reach the station before, or even a little after him, and I will yet triumph. The next best thing to obtaining the dispatches is to prevent his delivering them, and his death is as good a way as any I know of."

Thus communing with his inmost thoughts, the man spurred his steed on to his highest speed, for he had to calculate on the increased rapidity at which Old Sixty traveled, now that Tom was in command.

Ordinarily it was but an easy ride to beat the train by taking the mountain road.

Now, however, he must go at a breakneck gallop or lose the train.

After a furious ride of nearly half an hour, Rich suddenly came out upon an eminence whence he could overlook the surrounding country for miles.

He glanced quickly off in a certain direction, as if searching for something.

A shade of disappointment crossed his face, and he turned his eyes more to the right.

There in the distance could be seen a thin, luminous track moving along between the hills, while ever and anon, a faint glow would appear above it.

Hark!

Whoo-oo-oo!

Then comes a faint, far-away sound, like a wail, and then another, faint like the first, but something like a shriek.

"It is the train!" the man mutters, as he urges his horse down the descent, seemingly at the risk of breaking his neck.

"That young farnaught must have been going like the wind, and yet he cannot know the road. He is far ahead of where he should be by this time."

The night is now quite dark, but that seems to make but little difference to the lone horseman, for he plunges on as though traveling a broad, perfectly level road.

At the end of ten minutes he again reaches a point where he can see the light of the engine in the distance.

"I have gained some," he murmurs, "but still it is not enough."

Then, with a recklessness that seems almost insane, he urges his panting steed forward, and soon begins the real descent.

The road is frightfully steep, and a single misstep would hurl him from the path and dash him over the precipice into the river, a thousand feet below.

Down, down, down he keeps on his mad way, the horse panting and snorting, his flanks covered with foam, his eyes shining with a strange, unearthly glitter.

"I'll do it!" Rich presently mutters, as he obtains a view of the country from a lower level, and again catches sight of the engine's light.

"Ha! I have gained!" he cries. "The great curve served me well. Now to do my very best!"

He spares neither his horse nor himself, and at last dashes down a broad, well-kept avenue, from which the railroad can now be plainly seen.

He is neck and neck with the engine, and a muttered oath falls from his lips as he sees that the boy may even yet escape him.

He never pauses, however, and dashes into the station just as the train dashes out of it, without making the least halt.

Rich threw himself from his horse, bounded up the steps of the platform, and burst open the door of the general waiting-room.

Over in one corner the click of a telegraphic instrument can be heard, and near by is the operator, just making ready to go home.

"What train was that which—just went up?"

"Don't know, sir—must be a special; but there was only one car, and that a float, having on board a lot of wood."

"She didn't stop?"

"No, she merely whistled an alarm, and was thus in and out again with the speed of the wind."

"Did you know it was coming?"

"No, sir; and yet it seemed kind o' natural to see her again."

"See whom?"

"Old Sixty; that's the name of the locomotive, or, rather, her number."

"You are sure it was Old Sixty?"

"I'll be sure, though it's some time since I've seen her; but there's no mistaking her again when once you've seen her."

"Did you notice the engineer?"

"There were two persons in the cab, one a young fellow about twenty, and the other an old man."

"That's enough; I want to send a message."

"To whom?"

"The agent at Cedar Rapids station. You'll be sure to get him if you ring him up now."

"All right, sir."

Click—click—click, clicketty—click!

The telegraphic instrument began to rattle under the deft fingers of the operator, Rich listening attentively to the sound.

The operator paused, and Rich waited anxiously for the answer from the other office.

Clicketty—clicketty, click—click!

"I've got him!" cried the operator.

"Very well, send this message as I give it to you:

"Agent at Cedar Rapids station, Georgia."

Click—click, click—click!

"Be sure not to let Old Sixty engine go by to-night."

Clicketty—click, click-clicketty—click!

"The detention of the engineer and fireman is most important to the interests of the Confederacy."

Again the instrument clicked away, and presently the operator, having dispatched that much, raised his head and gave Rich an inquiring look.

The man seemed lost in thought.

"Any more, sir?"

"Yes. Leave the draw of the bridge open, and, if necessary, wreck the train."

"What! wreck Old Sixty? You wouldn't do that, sir?"

"Send the message."

The operator began striking the key at random, the result being meaningless, of course.

"Stop that," said Rich, drawing a pistol. "You are not sending the message I gave you."

"But, sir——"

"No buts; send the message."

"I have forgotten it."

Rich repeated it, and the instrument clicked it off, the man knowing by the sound that the operator was sending it correctly.

"Any more?"

"If unable to stop her, wreck the engine. Let me know later on what has happened."

"Any signature, sir?"

"Sinclair!"

This was the name of one of the rebel guerrilla chiefs, well known in this section.

The operator seemed excited, but completed the message.

Pretty soon the answer came back:

"All right. I understand. Will wire you soon."

"You had better wait," said Rich. "I shall want you to receive the message. I'll pay you for your trouble."

Rich then gave the man two English sovereigns, which greatly surprised him, as he had expected to be paid in the greatly depreciated currency of the Confederacy.

The receipt of gold, therefore, greatly increased his feeling of awe and respect.

"Now," muttered Rich, as he strolled to the door and lit a cigar, "we shall see who wins this fight, I or this saucy young Yankee!"

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT A STEADY HAND AND A GOOD AIM DID.

The Cedar Rapids station was not many miles distant from the one Tom had just passed.

The agent at that place had only just received the dispatch, therefore, when he heard the whistle of the approaching engine.

He knew that there was no train due from that direction at that hour.

It could therefore be no other than Old Sixty.

His orders were explicit enough, and he knew enough of General Sinclair to be assured that any disobedience of his will would meet with the most terrible punishment.

Being, besides, decidedly of the fire-eating sort of Confederate, he was only too glad to thwart the enemies of his so-called government.

Hearing the whistle, he hastily ran out of the station

and toward the drawbridge over the little nameless river that ran through this part of the country.

Who—whoo—whoo—oo—oo!

"Great gosh! Old Sixty is coming like the wind this trip! Something is up, I reckon. How she must be going. The 'special' never went faster than that."

He saw at a glance that there would be no use in trying to stop the train by signaling.

There was some urgent occasion, evidently, for her running through, and he might as well try to signal the wind.

The only way to stop her was to throw open the bridge.

In fact, he had orders to do so.

Therefore he could not be held responsible.

And yet, if he intended to do this, there was no time to lose.

He could see the light of the engine down the straight line of road, rapidly drawing nearer.

Whatever was to be done must be done immediately.

He therefore ran with all speed toward the draw, the lever that turned the bridge being just on the bank, and working by hydraulic power.

It was not necessary, therefore, to go on the bridge to turn it.

So much the better for him, so much the worse for Tom and for Old Sixty.

There would be less time lost in opening the draw.

The man ran with all speed, for the engine was coming on like the wind, and there was no time to lose.

Dashing forward, he seized the lever, the engine being only twenty feet away.

Only a second intervened between safety and destruction.

Will that brief time suffice to save, or will it bring ruin to young Tom and his beloved engine?

Our hero, after getting away from the Confederate troopers, passed around the mountain in safety, though at a reduced speed.

He must have light, and he did not wish to stop long enough to procure it.

Swinging a lantern on his arm, he scrambled out upon the footguard, running just along the boiler until he reached the pilot.

Here he grasped the rail, and swinging open the head-light door, managed to light the lamp within by means of his lantern.

Having accomplished this, he returned to the engine and suspended the lantern overhead.

The iron road was now illumined, and if there were any dangers ahead they would now be seen.

"Can't be too cautious, Tom," said old Ben. "Keep a sharp lookout ahead."

The only thing to avoid, however, was the too-rapid founding of the curves, some of which were unusually sharp.

Had Tom kept up the frantic pace he had before maintained, the old engine would have leaped the track to a certainty.

He chafed at the delays thus caused, but there was no help for it.

The question was one of safety here, and not speed.

"Only let me get around this infernal mountain," he muttered, "and you bet I'll make up for this detention."

Had he known how Rich was straining his utmost to get over the mountain ahead of him, it is doubtful if the young fellow would have heeded old Ben Bucket's words of timely warning.

At last, however, the detour was made.

The road was now pretty nearly straight for some distance.

Then Tom put on the steam, and Ben Bucket made no attempt to restrain him.

"We're right among the rebs," he thought to himself, "and it's just as well to make a dash for it. Lucky it's night, anyhow."

"I'm bound to get through," cried Tom; "and I'll do it if the whole rebel army stands in my way. Ben, jump over there and chuck some more wood in the cab. How are we off for water?"

"Pretty fair. You can stop when you get t'other side of Cedar Rapids bridge. There's a tank in the woods."

"Have we got another bridge to cross?"

"Yes."

"What kind?"

"Draw."

"Ahem!"

"Yes, and we want to keep our eyes skinned."

"You're right."

"Suppose they should get wind of your coming, and turn the draw on you?"

"I have to jump out, that's all, and get through the best way I could."

"That's why I say keep your eyes skinned. Tell ye what, it wouldn't do to go sliding through an open draw into some river."

"Isn't that a station ahead of us?" asked Tom presently.

"Yes; and you don't want to stop. There's a lot of the hottest Secessionists there, and at the next station, that you ever see, and you want to look out for 'em."

"They must look out for me if they try any nonsense."

"If they knew what errand you was on to-night, they'd do their damndest to try and stop ye."

"But how should they know?"

"The telegraph is working along here."

At this moment they swept by the station, those within hurrying out to see what sort of a train was going through, none being due in either direction at this time.

It was there that Rich just missed them and sent his telegraphic message.

"The bridge is ahead of us now," yelled Ben, as they rattled on.

"Can you see it at any distance?"

"Yea."

"Then I'll keep an eye on it."

It was as well that Tom formed this resolution.

On and on they went, and before long Ben pointed ahead of them.

"The bridge is in sight."

Tom presently saw it, its gaunt, white arms stretching across the road like a gallows.

As they rushed on, the engine cast a broad track of light ahead of them, and Tom, on the alert, saw every object most distinctly.

Suddenly a man came out of the little station, walked down the track, and then ran toward the bridge.

Tom sounded his whistle three or four times, and increased his speed.

The man only ran the faster.

Tom now divined his intention.

He meant to wreck the train!

He saw the position of the lever, and as the man paused took in the situation at a glance.

He had already guessed that the man meant to throw open the draw.

He had supposed, however, that it would be necessary to go to the middle of the bridge.

Now he saw his mistake.

One moment only would suffice to throw the engine from the track.

Let the draw be open but a few inches only and nothing could save him from destruction.

His blood seemed to freeze in his veins.

What could be done?

There was not an instant to lose.

The man already had his hand on the lever.

In another second it would be thrown back and the machinery set in motion.

Only one second intervened between him and death.

What could be accomplished in that time?

Much, if one possessed the requisite nerve.

And Tom did possess it.

Quick as a flash Tom seized one of the revolvers in his belt.

It was self-cocking.

The young fellow leaned far out of the little window in front of the cab, and threw up his hand.

The light brought out the figure of the agent in full relief.

Tom could not have had a better mark.

"Now, boy, or we are lost!"

So screams old Ben Bucket.

Tom does not hear him.

He acts quickly, nevertheless.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Three reports ring out almost simultaneously.

Three bullets strike the agent in the head in quick succession.

One would have sufficed.

He falls across the track, dead!

The lever has not been moved.

The engine rushes on impetuously.

The wheels crush over the dead body.

They destroy all semblance to the human form.

Then the train dashes upon the bridge, speeds across, rushes down the track on the opposite side, and Tom is safe!

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TOM INTERFERED WITH THE TELEGRAPH.

Anxiously the rebel leader awaited the reception of news from the bridge.

He paced up and down the little platform, puffing away like a volcano.

The smoke ascended in great clouds, the end of his cigar glowed like a fiery eye in the darkness.

Up and down, up and down, up and down.

Would that restless march never cease?

The cigar was smoked up, and another substituted.

This was half used up, when Rich suddenly paused.

He listened attentively, but heard no sound.

"Nothing yet?"

"Nothing."

"How long does it take to go to the bridge?"

"Twenty-five minutes, ordinarily."

"It would not take Old Sixty that time, going at the rate she was making."

"No, it would not. She would do it in ten."

"It's more than that now?"

"Yes," and the man glanced at the little clock over the door.

"What can have happened!"

"I don't know."

"See if you can get him."

Click, click, click, click-click!

Rich waited patiently for the answer.

After a long time it came.

"What do you want?"

"Ask him if the engine has passed."

The instrument clicked away for a few seconds, and then there was a pause.

Click!

"Yes."

"Fiends and furies! Ask him for particulars."

Pretty soon they came.

"Agent attempted to throw open draw to stop train; engineer shot him from cab; wheels passed over him; train reached other side all right."

"Confusion!" hissed the rebel, when he heard these words clicked off by the instrument.

"Wire all along the line!" he hissed. "Tell the step that train if they have to pull up the track, miles!"

The operator sat down and sent off the message.

An answer came speedily.

"Can't do it."

"Why?"

"Connections broken somewhere ahead of us."

"What is the matter?"

"Don't know. Suspect wires are cut."

"Find out."

"What was the errand that Old Sixty was on to-night?"

"One that, if successful, threatens the overthrow of the Confederacy."

"That settles it."

"What does he mean?" asked Rich.

"The engineer, knowing that the telegraph can pursue him, has cut the wires!"

"I never thought of that," growled the baffled Confederate. "Why didn't I send this message before?"

He walked up and down the room for some time, the operator waiting patiently for some demonstration, either on his part, or that of the operator at the next station.

Presently there came a message.

"Wires found cut in woods, nine miles from here. Connections partly restored."

"Partly restored? How's that?"

"They have found other breaks further on, but have not located them yet. We can't tell how many there are, and will have to send men all along the line."

"How long will that take?"

"The better part of the night."

"Ask him if he can't possibly get word through to Atlanta."

Click-click!

"He says not."

"Then send out a special engine, and chase this young villain."

"All right; he says he has sent word ahead, but that Old Sixty passed through some time since."

This last message was not received until half an hour later.

"That boy beats the fiend!" muttered the Confederate. "He is full of expedients. When I was spying around down at Brunswick I imagined that when he was put in

the special it would be an easy matter to out-
him. That's where I got left out in the cold."

Meanwhile, how was Tom making out in his bold run through a hostile country?

After his narrow escape at the bridge, he ran on for some little time in silence, and then Ben told him of a water tank in the woods, where he could stop without danger, and replenish his own supply.

They came to a halt, and, running the hose into the tank in the tender of the engine, began pumping away like good fellows.

"By the way, how the mischief do you suppose that fellow back there got wind of our coming?" asked Tom.

Ben Bucket pointed to the telegraph poles.

"Them things is working yet. You know I told ye that back along a bit."

"Who knows of our errand?"

"Them sogers could have telegraphed, or the fellows you chucked off the car."

"One of them must have broken his neck, and the other was certainly drowned."

"The other fellow wasn't hurt much. He only rolled over in the dirt."

"Well, if they rely on the telegraph to stop me, we'll soon settle that question."

Tom then went into the cab, and, getting out a pair of sharp, steel pliers from the kit under his seat, stuck them in his pocket.

Then, rubbing his hands with coarse sand, he began shinning up the nearest telegraph pole.

"I was always a good climber," he muttered, "although I haven't had any use for such work lately."

"When you have a good thing," chuckled Ben, "keep it by ye, for you can't tell when it'll come in handy."

Up and up went Tom, surely as well as rapidly, each movement carrying him higher, never slipping back, but always ascending.

It was fully twenty feet to the first wire, but it was at last accomplished.

Holding on firmly with both feet and one hand, Tom took the steel pliers from his pocket and closed them over the wire.

Snap!

The metal line was cut in two, the ends trailing on the ground.

"Now for the other!"

Climbing up a few feet further, Tom served the second wire as he had done the first, and then, dropping the pliers into his pocket, easily and rapidly slid down to the ground.

"There's no knowing what mischief I may have prevented," muttered the boy, as he re-entered the cab, and put away his implement.

The tanks were full by this time, and Tom and Ben now filled up the tender with wood from the platform car behind.

"There's considerable left yet," grunted Ben, "even if those two fellows did chuck a lot of it off in the road."

Having completed their work, Tom opened the throttle, and away they went through the woods at the same lively rate as before.

Some twenty miles further on, Tom having passed a little station, where he saw a light still burning, looked up and noticed that there were three wires running along the poles here.

"I am afraid those wires may give me trouble," he muttered. "I noticed that they seemed surprised when I ran by. How do I know that they won't try to stop me?"

Indeed, the operator had just been thinking of sending along the line to know what this engine and car were doing on the road at that time.

Tom looked at the wires, and then drew out his revolver, the one partly emptied.

"I wonder if I can do it in three shots? I don't want to waste any cartridges."

Then he stepped outside, walked ahead and braced himself against the boiler head.

Then he raised his right hand, supporting the arm across the left one.

He glanced keenly along the glittering barrel and fired.

Crack!

Snap!

Almost simultaneously with the report came the snapping of one of the wires, as it was cut by the bullet.

The keen-eyed fellow had cut the wire while standing on the front of an engine going at full speed!

The feat was unparalleled in the history of marksmanship.

"That wasn't so bad," muttered Tom, coolly. "I think I'll try the second wire."

Without further thought he did try it, and succeeded in severing it as he had done the first.

There remained now only one wire to cut, and this was higher than the others had been, as it ran along the tops of the poles.

Tom took more careful aim this time.

Crack!

"Thunder and guns!" muttered Ben, "I never see such shots. He didn't make a miss."

Tom then reloaded his revolver, dropped it into his belt, and coolly returned to the cab.

"There's no knowing what good I may have done by those three shots," he said quietly; "but I'm glad I made them, for it shows me what I can do."

Thus it was that the rebel leader and the operators along the line failed to make telegraphic connection that night, whereby some very important messages failed of being delivered.

CHAPTER X.

MORE TROUBLE ALL AROUND—THE WRECK.

After the incident just mentioned, Tom kept on for some time, until his water began to get short and he knew he would be obliged to stop.

"Then you'll have to stop at Campbell's," said Ben, "and run a big risk."

"I've been doing that ever since I started," was the reply.

The wood was also running short, though there was little doubt but what it would last until the end of the run. The town that Ben had mentioned was a small one a few miles ahead, and not very important.

Lest word should be sent on, however, Tom stopped and cut the telegraph wires, so as to cut off communication.

This time, however, he had not been quick enough, for word had just been sent over the reconnected wires to stop him.

A special engine was also dispatched after him, but he

was still far enough ahead not to mind that, even if he had known it.

Word had been sent, indeed, but when Tom reached the town there had been no instructions received here as yet, no one being in the station at that hour.

Tom drew up at the water tank and filled up, after which he and Ben piled all the wood yet remaining on the car into the cab.

They had hardly completed the job, when a dozen men came hurrying toward the station on horseback.

"What are you doing here?" demanded one.

"What do you think? Can't you see we're getting ready to go out?"

"Who are you, anyhow?"

"Reckon you don't belong about yer, stranger?"

This was true enough, the man having come from the next town above.

"Well, what makes me particular is that there's a miserable Yankee running over this yer road to-night, and we're looking for him."

"You'll have to go further up, then, 'cause he passed here just now, and we're going to catch him."

"Then you're the special that they ordered out?"

"Oh, yes, I'm the special!" answered Tom quickly.

"The mudsills cut the wires back yer, but some on 'em they didn't cut quick enough, and word has gone on to Atlanta."

"The deuce it has!" thought Tom.

"We'll catch him before he gets as far as that," continued the man.

"I wish you may," said Tom. "I'm going to see what I can do myself."

"Look yer, boys!" cried one of the crowd, who had been on the outside, and now made his way forward, "this yer feller's a humbug."

"What's that you say?" demanded Tom, stepping into the cab.

"I say, look yer, this ain't no special engine, boys. Look at the number on her cab. Did ye never hear of Old Sixty?"

Things were becoming critical.

"It's the same on the front, too!" declared another.

"There it is, '60' in big figgers."

Tom now opened the throttle, moved his lever and grabbed his revolver, all in one minute.

Old Ben Bucket stood just within the cab, on the other

of Tom, handy to the boy's second "barker," which he now appropriated.

"That's Old Sixty!" yelled the stranger, a long-haired, slab-sided specimen of Georgian, known commonly as a "cracker."

"Old Sixty!" yelled the crowd.

The engine now began to move.

"Yes, and the Yanks have had that there injine for forty years. This yer boy is the spy we're arter. Plug him full o' holes, boys!"

"She's gettin' up speed."

"He'll give us the slip!"

"Don't let him out!"

"Pepper him!"

Old Sixty began to show her heels.

The horsemen dashed along-side, uttering loud, threatening cries.

They had discovered the cheat that had been played upon them.

They had no idea of letting the Yankee messenger escape.

Tom saw that he was in for a fight.

He therefore decided to have the first blow.

Springing to the side of the cab, he raised his pistol and shouted.

"Gentlemen, I am Tom Warren, and this engine is Old Sixty. I am running the 'special' to-night, and I've got business on hand that will knock your rebellion higher than a kite! Now, if you want to catch me, come on!"

Two or three of the horsemen had already leaped from their horses to the platform car, and now rushed toward the cab with the intention of roasting Tom out.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Tom had no notion of their doing anything of the kind.

He opened fire upon them at once.

So did Ben Bucket, who was shouting himself hoarse.

Tom took one fellow in his arms, and caused him to fall from the quickly moving train.

A second was shot in the leg and followed his companion.

The third concluded that he had better do likewise, and he jumped off and rolled down a bank.

Ben had lit the "crackers" in the mouth just as he was

shouting for assistance, and that put an end to his eloquence, though fortunately for him the shot was not fatal, the bullet passing out through his cheek.

Of course the horsemen could not hope to keep pace with the engine, and they soon fell behind.

"I say," said Tom, when the last had disappeared, "we must get rid of that car behind us."

"Right you are. Tell 'em what we've got to make tracks."

Tom diminished the speed, and soon came to a halt.

"If word has been sent on ahead, we've got to look out for signals. Pull the pin out, Ben."

"There she goes, Tom."

"How far are we now?"

"Where from?"

"Atlanta."

"About thirty miles."

"Then we've got wood and water enough."

"Reckon we have."

"We must do our best now, for we don't know what is in store for us. If Sherman hasn't take the place it may be all up with us."

"Well, Tom, we'll risk it."

Away they started now, leaving the empty car standing on a curve.

"Hush!"

It was Tom that spoke.

"There's a train or an engine behind us, Tom. I heard it myself."

"All right. They must have made their connections after all. Well, I guess I knocked them out of doing any particular harm."

There were an engine and two cars filled with soldiers, farmhands and general loafers coming on behind, and it was the sound that this made that reached Tom's practiced ear.

He did not mind this new complication, however, for he knew he could distance his pursuers, and so he clapped on more steam and dashed away like the wind.

Besides, there was the empty platform car on the curve. That would probably have something to say or do in the matter.

On came the pursuers under a full pressure of steam.

Ten minutes after Tom's departure they arrived at the curve.

The pilot struck the empty car violently just as they were rounding the curve.

The engineer, of course, did not see the obstruction.

Crash!

Smash!

Rattle—rattle—bang!

The car was driven ahead with great violence, the engine recoiling from the shock.

The car, however, did not round the curve, but tipped over, the forward trucks being thrown from the rails.

This left the body lying directly across the track.

The result was that before the engineer could reverse he had again crashed into the obstruction, which was now broken in two.

The track was littered with rubbish.

Into the midst of this dashed the train, the engineer being unable to stop, or fearing to do so, at such a place.

Over went the engine, rolling down the bank, the boiler exploding with a loud report, and scattering the fragments in every direction.

The cars were dragged from the rails, which were torn from their places, and the luckless soldiers and nondescripts were spilled out upon the sand.

The pursuit had come to a sudden and inglorious termination.

Tom had not yet been caught nor stopped, and he might even yet escape.

At all events, the present party would not catch him; and as the soldiers picked themselves up and rubbed their bruised limbs, they realized that chasing a runaway by rail does not present as many attractions as it might.

CHAPTER XI.

OLD SIXTY DISAPPEARS FROM THE SCENE—CONCLUSION.

Was Tom to escape after all, and deliver his important dispatches in spite of every effort to catch or stop him?

Tom himself hardly dared to think what might happen.

He was certainly ahead of his pursuers, so far as he knew.

What he did not know, however, was whether word had been received at Atlanta.

If it had been sent, the town must still be in the possession of the rebels.

If such were not the case, what good would it have done to send word to look out for him?

What Tom did not know the reader may.

Intelligence was received at Atlanta concerning Tom's errand.

The place was not yet in the hands of the Federals, although besieged.

Once the young engineer reached his destination, the rebels felt that their cause was lost.

He must be stopped.

They had learned that Tom had successfully evaded pursuit, and was now but a few miles away.

Rich had succeeded after much trouble—the dispatching of orderlies here, aides there, and messengers somewhere else—in re-establishing communication with the threatened town.

He now explained the danger that lay in allowing the Federal messenger to cross the river into the city.

He urged extreme measures, and these were now to be taken.

At this moment Tom was not more than ten miles from the city, having eluded all pursuit.

Time was precious.

The only thing to do was to blow up the railroad bridge.

That would stop Tom's course, and also keep Sherman and his army away.

In fact, the rebel leaders had got a most extraordinary misconception of the force that was coming against them along the line of the G., A. & G. R. R.

Instead of a man and a boy on one solitary locomotive, they had somehow got the idea that a whole army had seized the railroad and was marching upon the town.

Hence the state of panic which they were in.

Nothing but the destruction of the railroad bridge would accomplish their object.

This must be accomplished at once, and nothing but gunpowder would do it quick enough.

"How many more miles, Ben?"

"Five."

"All seems quiet."

"Yes; tell ye what, it is."

It was not quite late, and as the good old engine bounded along over the track Tom felt his heart beat faster than ever.

He was near to the accomplishment or defeat of his mission, he could not tell which, and, therefore, no wonder his heart beat so wildly.

Would they end the journey in safety?

Might not defeat overtake them just at the very last moment when victory seemed certain?

Would he be able to deliver his dispatches after all?

Might he not be robbed of them?

Why had he not committed them to memory?

Now it was too late.

These, and a hundred other thoughts crowded through the boy's busy brain.

Suddenly, in the midst of all the worry and questioning, they came in sight of the little river they would be obliged to cross before reaching the city.

It lay calm and peaceful at their feet, the lights of the town reflected on its surface, its waters murmuring gently as they flowed on to join the sea.

A substantial railroad bridge was thrown across, joining the two shores with a band of iron.

Tom breathed freer when he saw the bridge.

Somehow or other, he had got the idea that it would have been destroyed when he reached it.

He blew the whistle three or four times shrilly, and then glided at full speed upon the structure leading to the city beyond.

Suddenly he saw a number of shadowy forms running over the bridge in the direction of the town.

The glare of the headlight brought them out in bold relief, and he could see that there were quite a number of them.

They all seemed in a tremendous hurry, as if fleeing for their lives.

What could it mean?

Suddenly a bright light shot up from the middle of the bridge.

Then there was a puff of white smoke, which for an instant shut everything from sight.

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

A succession of tremendous reports now sounded, the last being something terrible.

The ear seemed benumbed by the awful volume of sound.

Hardly had it died away before the air was filled with flying fragments.

Bits of timber, huge masses of iron, splinters, sparks and burning particles flew in every direction.

Then came a more deafening report than ever.

The bridge shook under the shock.

The hills echoed and re-echoed the sound.

The very waters seemed agitated by the concussion, and the spray dashed high in the air.

Tom felt the bridge tremble beneath him.

His face turned deathly pale.

He sprang to the throttle.

In a second he had closed it and jammed the lever hard down.

Then he attempted to reverse.

Too late!

The speed was too great.

What had happened?

The bridge had been blown up by gunpowder.

The center span had been destroyed, and there was a gap twenty feet wide right over the deepest part of the river.

The rebels had been beforehand with the brave young engineer.

His course had been suddenly blocked.

And now the engine was rushing on to its doom.

A few short moments would pass, and then it would go crashing into the river below.

The enemy had accomplished their end, and the bridge was a ruin.

Although not one minute had elapsed since Tom had struck the bridge, many things had happened.

The engine was still safe, but it was impossible to stop her, and her doom was certain.

It was indeed the last run of the "special."

It had passed through all sorts of dangers, only to meet its ruin at the last.

A thousand thoughts hurried through Tom's brain, but there was one that remained uppermost.

The dispatches!

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He must save them!

Even now he might be able to deliver them.

He must not let this last danger thwart him.

This terrible disaster must not overwhelm him.

The thought of escape sprang into his mind instantaneously with the destruction of the bridge.

The engine was rushing toward the gap.

It was doomed.

Not so this brave young life.

That must be saved!

Quick as a flash Tom dove head first through the window of the cab.

Ben sprang from the platform between the cab entrance and the tender.

Both actions were simultaneous.

Tom flew through the air, and struck the water with his feet.

He sank to a great depth.

The instant Tom came to the top he struck out downward.

Crash!

Boom!

A moment later Old Sixty leaped into the chasm.

The pilot struck the timbers of the bridge on the other side, shaking them violently.

Then the good old engine, that had done such excellent service that day, plunged headlong into the stream.

The overcharged boilers burst with a loud noise, and the water was thrown to an enormous height.

Then the shattered wreck of what had once been a splendid piece of mechanical skill sank to the bottom, to remain no one knew how long.

Old Sixty had run her last trip, and had met with an end worthy of her.

And what of Tom?

Fortunately for him he had been carried to a considerable distance before the locomotive struck the water.

His own strength carried him still further, the increased swell dashing him on like a cork.

He dove and swam as long as he could under water, coming up some distance from the city, but on the same side of the stream.

He wrung the water from his clothes, and then examined the precious packet intrusted to his care.

The papers had been inclosed in a thick leather wallet, being themselves encased in a tightly-sealed oiled envelope.

They were, therefore, perfectly intact, although the wallet was soaked.

Tom threw this into the river after examining it to see that it contained nothing else of value, and then restored the papers to his inside breast pocket.

Then he made his way along the river, leaving the city behind, and never stopped until near morning.

He was suddenly hailed by a picket, who sternly commanded him to halt.

There was light enough for him to distinguish the man's uniform, and his heart gave one great bound, and then seemed to stand still.

The man was a Union picket.

"Dispatches for General Sherman," said Tom. "I have just run through on a locomotive. Take me to your commanding officer."

Tom was passed on until he finally reached the headquarters of Sherman himself, and delivered the precious packet.

The general read the dispatches carefully, and then asked Tom a few questions.

Our hero briefly related his adventures of the last few hours.

"My boy," said the famous general, "you have done nobly, and I cannot thank you too highly for having succeeded in the face of so many perils in delivering me these dispatches. They are of the utmost importance."

"I knew that, sir, when the rebels tried so hard to get them away from me."

"Upon the information which they contain, and upon my obedience of the orders herein given, depend the fate of the Confederacy. Boy, if I could make you a general, I'd do it!"

"Thank you, sir," said Tom, quietly, as he put his hand into the proffered one of the old soldier, and felt the strong grasp encircling his own.

Subsequent events are too well known to need repetition here.

The capture of Atlanta and the march to the sea—the very matters spoken of in the dispatches delivered by Tom—followed, and every one knows the result.

The downfall of the Confederacy soon followed, and peace rested over all the land.

Tom was an aide of General Sherman's during that eventful march, and rendered him most invaluable services.

At the close of the war he returned home, and, when he reached the age of twenty-one, married the daughter of his firm friend, General—formerly Colonel Ellis.

But what of queer old Ben Bucket?

Tom never saw him after that plunge into the river, nor was his body ever found, the presumption being that he was struck by the falling engine and killed.

Tom made every effort to ascertain his fate, but without success, and he was at last forced to the conclusion that he would never see the old fellow again, and he never has.

The war has long been finished, sectional strife is now forgotten, and the men of both sides mingle together and talk over those old days in the pleasantest manner; and Tom, now Mr. Thomas Warren, owner of one of the largest machine shops and locomotive works in the country, often entertains his friends and brings back stirring memories with that wonderful story of his, here given to the public for the first time of The Last Run of the "Special."

THE END.

Read "THE SECRETS OF THE DIAMOND ISLAND," which will be the next number (10) of "All Around Weekly."

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CHOICE READING MATTER.

A four-legged pickpocket and expert thief was recently captured in a Paris jewelry store. While a salesman was showing some gems to an acrobat named Miguel Androval, a detective observed the head of a tiny monkey emerge from Androval's coat pocket. Then the monkey's paw shot out and while the salesman's attention was diverted the animal seized several valuable rings and withdrew to its hiding place. Tests made after the arrest proved the monkey to be an accomplished pickpocket and shoplifter.

Among the curiosities of tree life is the sofar, or whistling tree of Nubia. When the winds blow over this tree it gives out flute-like sounds, playing away to the wilderness for hours at a time strange, weird melodies. It is the spirit of the dead singing among the branches, the natives say, but the scientific white man says that the sound is due to a myriad of small holes which an insect bores in the spines of the branches. The weeping tree of the Canary Islands is another arboreal freak. This tree in the dirtiest weather will rain down showers from its leaves, and the natives gather up the water from the pool formed at the foot of the trunk and find it pure and fresh. The tree exudes the water from innumerable pores at the base of the leaves.

In a few years coppers will no longer weigh down man's pockets in this country. As it is no more bronze money is now coined, and the shortage is being felt. Aluminum will be substituted, and it is hoped that the new coinage will have been begun by the end of the year, says a London contemporary. The metal, or rather an alloy of it, will be used only for penny and halfpenny pieces, which will be about the size of but much thicker and lighter than francs and half francs, and thus easily distinguishable from these coins. The recent quarter franc piece in nickel has proved a failure, because it is constantly being taken for a franc, as tourists here know to their cost. Besides lightness, cleanliness is another advantage of aluminum, which does not oxidize in air.

Located in the northern portion of Blue Lake Township, covering an area of several acres and preventing to a great extent the successful farming of the land in that vicinity, is an immense patch of cactus of the prickly-pear variety. Naturally growing only in the warmer portions of America, the spread of the big patch in the extreme northern part of Muskegon County, Mich., has been the cause of no little comment, and the stories of its origin are numerous. Nearly half a century ago, C. F. Wheeler, connected with the Agricultural Depart-

ment at that time, in going over Muskegon County happened upon this strange cactus patch. He pronounced the plant a native of Arizona and was able to explain its presence in Michigan only on the theory that some Indian tribe, either migrating here willingly or driven northward rather than become enslaved to some more powerful tribe, had brought the plant. Legends of how the cactus was brought to this country are still told by the residents of Blue Lake, who have heard from time immemorial the stories of its origin from the lips of aged Indians, who fifty years ago were numerous in the country. The Indians used to say that the cactus was brought from Arizona here by the band of Zuni Indians, who, conquered by another of the minor tribes, were forced to accept exile or slavery. The date of this coming to Michigan was placed by these Indians at about the year 1400 from estimates made in the stories told them by their forefathers, and to prove their statements that the cactus was the best of food they would burn off the barbs and make various native dishes of them. In spite of the climate here the cacti seem to flourish in the dry regions of Blue Lake, and in the last few years have been extending the area which they cover.

RIB TICKLERS.

"That nephew of yours is a promising-looking young fellow. What does he run to mostly—money or brains?" "He has brains enough to run to money. He's making a dead set at old Bullion's daughter."

Tenant (angrily)—The cellar of our house is full of rats. What are you going to do about it? Landlord (calmly)—Nothing. What do you expect for seventeen dollars a month, anyway—a cellar full of white mice?

An eccentric instructor was explaining a piece of mechanism to his class. Placing his fingers upon the handle and turning it, he remarked: "You notice that this machine is turned by a crank." And a titter passed through the whole class.

"I don't like these women who gossip about others, do you?" "I should say not. Now, there's Mrs. Gadsley. She's always telling mean things about her neighbors. And Mrs. Hammer-ton talks perfectly dreadful about her friends. Thank goodness, I never say anything about anybody!"

Guest (angrily)—Look here, landlord, I'm heartily tired of the way you do business here. Didn't you ever have a gentleman stop with you before? Landlord (gazing at him searchingly)—Hum! Are you a gentleman? Guest (more angrily)—Of course! Landlord (decidedly)—Then I never did.

A Philadelphia photographer tells this as having actually happened. A woman entered his studio. "Are you the photographer?" "Yes, madam." "Do you take children's pictures?" "Yes, certainly." "How much do you charge?" "Three dollars a dozen." "Well," said the woman sorrowfully, "I'll have to see you again. I've only got eleven."

Henry had suffered an illness which had left his hearing slightly impaired. He was very anxious to give a Christmas present to his teacher, and upon being asked if he had any idea as to what she would like, replied: "She says she thinks 'Cistine McDonald' is pretty." Then seeing the smile upon mamma's face, added hastily: "Well, I was in the back part of the room and she spoke low; maybe she said 'Sixteen McDonald.'"

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

By Kit Clyde.

"Well," said Guy Moreton emphatically, "I don't want to live here."

"Tis kind of gloomy, sir," said the gray-haired servant who had ushered him into the room and who was lingering a moment to give the blazing wood fire a few last pokes.

"Gloomy? I should say so," answered Guy, surveying the high, old-fashioned ceiling, begrimed by the dust of years, and the low, iron-barred windows, with a rueful air. "I'm much obliged, I'm sure, to Uncle Thadwick for his kind bequest, but nevertheless I shall assuredly sell it."

"Anything I can do, sir?" asked the servant obsequiously.

"Nothing more. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir." And the old domestic left the room with a reverent bow.

Locking the door after him, Guy dropped into an easy-chair, and drawing it up to the fire lighted a fragrant Havana.

"Well," mused he as he watched the blue rings ascend slowly to the ceiling, "how my respected uncle ever existed in this funereal old pile is more than I can see. But anyhow, dropping that branch of the subject, he could not have done better than to leave it to such an exemplary young man as myself. But," concluded the speaker, puffing absently away upon his weed, "as I said before, I shall assuredly sell it."

Guy was right.

Moreton Hall was a somber-looking pile, built way back some time during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and possessing but little charm to the active, restless young American who had succeeded to it by the death of his English uncle.

"Heigho!" yawned Guy, after disposing of a couple of cigars, "time to go to bed; almost eleven." And in the course of ten minutes his head was resting peacefully upon his pillow; but he could not sleep.

Turn and twist as he might, the drowsy god would not respond to his overtures.

Eleven o'clock struck, and then twelve; still he was wide awake.

But as the echo of the midnight hour's last stroke died away he felt an undefinable feeling take possession of him.

A feeling of vague terror—at what he knew not.

Gradually he felt a cold chill run over his limbs.

He put his hand to his brow. It was as cold as ice.

"What can ail me?" he muttered, vainly seeking to derive warmth from the bedclothes.

Suddenly there burst upon his ear the sound of music.

A low, musical, monotonous chant, seemingly sung in solemn unison by some unseen choir.

The strains seemed to grow nearer and nearer.

Where had he heard that awe-inspiring chant before?

All at once, as the melody rose higher and higher, and

then slowly sank again to almost a whisper, he recognized the music.

It was the famed miserere.

The monks' dirge for the dead.

"Who can be dead?" he involuntarily muttered.

As if in answer to his unpremeditated question the door of his room swung slowly back upon its hinges.

Then the music sounded with startling distinctness.

What!

Could he believe his eyesight?

Through the open door, two by two, came a ghostlike procession of black-robed monks, their cowls drawn closely over their faces.

In each right hand was borne a blazing torch, whose lurid rays lit up the whole room with strange vividness.

On, on, came the long procession, keeping time to the weird, sorrowful chant.

On, on, until the foremost reached the wall immediately opposite to where their startled watcher lay.

Then, as if by magic, part of the wall slowly sank down into the floor, leaving a large aperture through which blew a moist, chilly air.

Through this the leading monks silently passed, followed by their spectral brethren until about twelve had disappeared.

Then, without a note of warning, the dismal miserere suddenly ceased.

As if this was a preconcerted signal, the remaining monks noiselessly arranged themselves into two lines, facing each other, and extending from the door at which they had entered to the opening in the wall.

And as they did so their eyes simultaneously turned toward the door.

Spellbound, Guy gazed, too.

Into the room, with bowed down bare heads, came two men in armor—the armor of centuries ago.

Following them, borne on the shoulders of four meanly-dressed peasants, was a terrible something.

Guy raised himself on one elbow and peered at it with protruding eyeballs.

Great God!

There, reposing on a velvet pall, black as night, was a corpse.

A human corpse!

The corpse of an old man, enveloped in only a shroud.

And that shroud, snow white in all other parts, was disfigured above the breast by a dark red stain.

The stain of blood!

Slowly, amidst the walls and mourning cries of the monastic spectators, the ghastly corpse, supported by its phantom bearers, moved on, Guy following it with his eyes as if magnetized.

Through the wall, into the impenetrable darkness beyond, it passed.

Then, once more, the notes of the mournful hymn rang out, in all their melancholy sweetness, upon the air, as the attendant monks came together in couples and followed after the dead man.

But the last one lingered a moment, and turning toward Gay, beckoned invitingly with one wan hand.

Impelled by some supernatural influence, Guy arose, and as the monk passed out into the outer darkness hastily pursued him.

Guided by the light of his strange conductor's torch, he had no difficulty in following him through, as it seemed to him, a score of vaulted passages hitherto unknown to him.

But finally, in turning an angle, he lost sight of his ghostly guide.

He was alone.

Alone, and where?

He did not know.

What his feelings were at this moment no pen can tell.

He seemed on the verge of fainting.

Subduing his weakness, though, for a moment, he staggered against what appeared to be a door.

He touched it.

It yielded to his hand, and flew back with a sullen crash.

A moment more, and Guy Moreton found himself in a cell-like room composed entirely of stone.

But, strangest of all, at the upper end hung a dark green curtain, encircled overhead by a row of burning tapers.

Guy reeled up to it and seized it with his shaking fingers.

Could that enshadowing curtain hide anything?

A terrible suspicion crossed Guy's overworked brain, and for a moment he faltered.

Then his American pluck came to his rescue, and he boldly flung the veil aside.

One look—and then, his face pale with terror, he sank back and clasped his hands over his eyes.

What did he see?

In a deep recess in the wall rested a decomposed, half worm-eaten body.

The ghastly remains of the corpse which Guy had seen borne in state through his room, attended by all the pomp and solemnity of the church's service for the dead.

The sight was too much.

With a maniacal laugh Guy fled in horror from the awful spot.

Fled until his strength was exhausted and his brain seemed giving way.

Suddenly he stumbled—struck his head violently against the floor—then all was black.

Where was he?

Slowly his scattered senses came back to him.

He was lying in his bed; in the same chamber which he had left to follow the beckoning monk.

Who was that grave face bending over him?

Why, it was Doctor Aubrey, the famed London physician.

"D—doctor," stammered Guy faintly.

"Yes," answered the medical man kindly, "it's I. You've had brain fever for three weeks, ever since a servant found you senseless in the hall. It was a hard pull, but we brought you through. Thank God, young man, your life's saved. I expect you had been living too high."

Guy did not contradict the doctor.

With new life came new hopes.

He knew that if the story of his vision was publicly divulged he could never sell Moreton House unless at a ruinous sacrifice.

Therefore, like a wise man, he held his peace, and never till now does the world know of the terrible sights which Guy Moreton saw on that ever memorable night—sights as fearful as they were unexplainable.

But in searching the family records he came across a legend of some ancient Moreton who was murdered by his own brother, and secretly buried by a few faithful monks after the murderer had taken possession of the family estates.

And a ghostly representation of this clandestine burial Guy Moreton steadfastly believes he has seen.

Few people know that the "Boy on the Burning Deck" is not a myth, but an actual fact, and still fewer know that the man who gave the order for the destruction of the vessel on whose deck the aforesaid boy stood, was born in Jamaica Plain, Mass., and lived there till his royalist father, who objected strenuously to the American Revolution, transplanted him to England, where he served under Nelson in the Battle of the Nile. The boy was French, son of the admiral of the French ship "l'Orient," and that was the vessel that blew up with the immortal boy standing by the mainmast. The boy's unconscious destroyer, Captain Benjamin Hallowell, was born in the old Boylston House, still standing at the corner of Boylston and Center streets, in Jamaica Plain. The house was built in 1726 by Boylston, and afterward passed to the rabid royalist, Benjamin Hallowell, after whom the captain was named. The old man lived in Jamaica Plain long enough to make himself unpopular when the American Revolution broke out. The son had been early sent to England for his education, and he became one of the seven American-born men to attain distinction in the British navy. In the Battle of the Nile Captain Hallowell had command of the ship "Swiftsure," which ran down the luckless "l'Orient." When Captain Hallowell gave the command for the French vessel to be blown up he knew nothing of the thirteen-year-old son of the French admiral, who, foolishly, but heroically, obeyed his stern father's order, "Don't leave the vessel till I give you permission," and his "proud, though childlike form" graced the doomed vessel when she "with fragments strewed around the sea." Captain Hallowell afterward heard the bad tale, and was much moved by it. The boy called out three times in agony to his father, he learned, but stood resolutely by the mainmast, though his father lay gold in death. So much moved was the captain that he had a coffin made in the boy's honor out of the floating fragments of the "l'Orient," and sent it to his friend and patron, Lord Nelson, with the story of the boy's bravery, and expressing deep regret for the young hero's untimely end. Nelson had the coffin placed in the cabin in remembrance of the boy, and Captain Hallowell himself told the tale to the then widely known poet, Felicia Hemans. Her sympathies were immediately excited, and she immortalized the boy in her sentimental but immortal verses, and she named him wisely "Casabianca" (White Soul).

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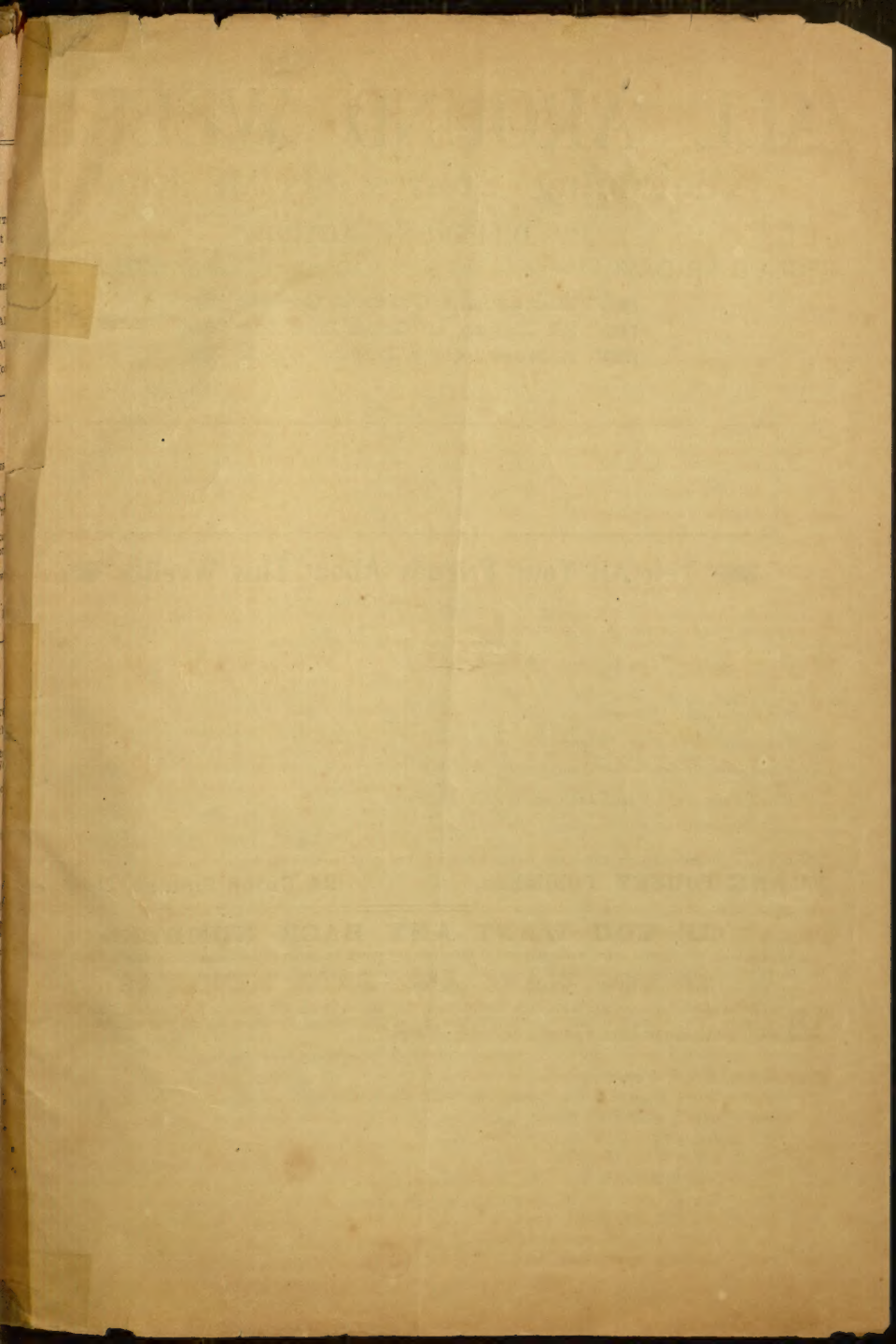
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